



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

August 18, 2011

To the Director, Office of Economic Adjustment
U.S. Department of Defense
VIA E-MAIL: FFOsubmit@wso.whs.mil

RE: Transportation Infrastructure Comments regarding the July 21, 2011 Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) to obtain funding from the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) for construction of Transportation Infrastructure Improvements associated with medical facilities related to recommendations of the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

To the Office of Economic Adjustment:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed criteria for this essential Federal Funding Opportunity. I respectfully submit comments regarding Section V, number 1, of the FFO on behalf of Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett and the BRAC Implementation Committee, his advisory body comprised of community leaders and representatives of federal, state and local government stakeholders.

As you know, Bethesda, Maryland is the home of the newly-designated Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC). When the BRAC-mandated consolidation of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center with the National Naval Medical Center is complete next month, personnel at the Bethesda campus will increase by nearly one-third, from 8,000 to 10,500. Significantly, visits to the medical center campus will double from 500,000 to 1,000,000 per year. This dramatic and unanticipated growth is occurring in a densely developed urban environment with a transportation infrastructure that is already at capacity and where road widening is neither an option nor a solution. Montgomery County and the State of Maryland have been working together to design a number of mitigation projects, focusing on increased access to mass transit, improved traffic operations at key intersections, and enhancements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of our congressional delegation that have led to this Federal Funding Opportunity, which is urgently needed to address Montgomery County's BRAC-related transportation needs. The County and State have allocated funds to initiate transportation mitigation projects, but budget constraints have made it impossible to fully fund them and we won't be able to adequately address BRAC-related congestion without a significant infusion of federal funds. The County funded a NEPA environmental study for a transit access project; the Defense Department has provided \$28 million under the Defense Access Program for which we are very grateful, but that funding would only complete a portion of the design approved by a consortium of government stakeholders. Our congressional delegation has procured \$10 million to supplement the State's budget for the intersections improvement project but, again, this funding is not sufficient to complete the project.

The FFO, therefore, is very important to us but there are concerns about the wording of criterion "b." My interpretation of this criterion as published in the Federal Register is that the criterion places 25% weight on the overall impacts of BRAC-related transportation issues, which I infer relates to the impacts of these transportation issues on the community in which the facility is located. This interpretation was confirmed in a teleconference with OEA officials on August 9, 2011.

However, criterion "b" does not clearly refer to the impacts on the community and needs to be restated to better reflect what I understand to be its true intent. The lack of clarity of criterion "b" could result in OEA granting authorities' judging project proposals with an interpretation that might deny fair consideration to worthy "outside the fence" transportation infrastructure projects that would mitigate BRAC-related congestion. This concern is especially relevant because the 2005 BRAC round failed to properly provide for the significant impacts on local communities, and there is concern that future BRAC rounds could repeat this mistake.

Therefore, I respectfully suggest the following change to criterion "b"

"b. The magnitude (e.g. overall number of people affected, degree of failure, etc.) of the [INSERT: BRAC-related] transportation issue that affects the [INSERT: community] ~~[DELETE: military medical facility]~~, expressed in terms of accepted and appropriate transportation planning and assessment techniques (the greater the magnitude of the issue, the higher the score), 25%;"

Again, thank you for providing this opportunity to comment on the proposed criteria for this FFO for essential transportation infrastructure projects to mitigate BRAC-related congestion at military medical facilities such as the newly-designated Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda. We appreciate your efforts on behalf of BRAC-impacted communities and look forward to working with you on this FFO process.

Sincerely,



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